The Root of All Things

Sermon 13: The Architecture of Illusion

An exploration of the Mulapariyaya Sutta (The Discourse on the Root of All Things).

The first discourse of the Majjhima Nikaya serves as the alphabet for deciphering the Buddha's teaching. It deconstructs the worldling's tendency to solidify experience into 'things'.

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The Perspective of Two Eyes

- **The One-Eyed View:** Relying solely on Pali discourses can limit perspective, seeing only the surface form.
- **The Two-Eyed View:** Comparative study (using Chinese and Tibetan parallels) acts as the second eye, clarifying obscure passages.
- **The Insight:** Viewing the *Mulapariyaya Sutta* through 'two eyes' reveals it is not just about ontology, but about the cessation of consciousness—stepping out—stepping out of the cognitive structure completely.

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The Trap of “Earth is Earth”

The Worldling’s Error: Perception → Imagining (*Maññanā*) → Delighting.

The Process: The untaught ordinary person perceives Earth, then immediately imagines “I am Earth,” “Earth is mine,” or “I am in Earth.”

The Result: A block of ice feels hard, so they grasp it as "Earth.” Reality is attributed to the concept, and existence is taken for granted.

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The Grammar of Entrapment

- **The Linguistic Illusion:** Grammar creates entities where there are only processes.

- **‘It Rains’:** We invent an actor (‘It’) for the action (‘Rains’).
- **‘The River Flows’:** There is no river apart from the flowing. The river *is* the flowing.

- **The Consequence:** Grammar is a transaction tool for worldlings, implying substance where there is none. We assume the grammar of language assume the grammar of language matches the grammar of nature.

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The Ego's Echo: *Maññanā*

The Definition: *Maññanā* (Conceiving/ Imagining) is the "Subtle Bondage of Mara."

The Pathology: "Conceiving is a disease. Conceiving is a tumor. Conceiving is a barb."

The Forms: "I am," "I shall be," "I shall not be."

The Measurement: *Asmi* ("I am") is the peg from which all other measurements are taken. Once "I" is born, "Here" and "There" follow.

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The Cognitive Feedback Loop

- **Constructed Experience:** Modern cognitive psychology confirms that we see what we expect. Perception is a construction, not a reflection.
- **The Mechanism:** The mind grasps a *Nimitta* (Sign) and uses *Anuvyañjana* (Corroborative Features) to confirm its bias.
- **The Confirming Thought:** “This accords with this; therefore, the sign I took is right.” We reinforce our own delusions through confirmation bias.

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The Tale of *Vipacitti*

The Parable: Demon King Vipacitti is bound by a five-fold bondage.

The Mechanism: When he thinks "Gods are righteous," the bonds vanish. When he thinks "Gods are unrighteous," the bonds return.

The Lesson: The bondage of *Maññanā* is subtler than physical bonds. We are bound by our own mental vacillations.

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The Learner (*Sekha*)

- **The Training:** The disciple in higher training still uses grammar but knows it is a trap.
- **The Practice:** *Ma mannayitho*—"Do not imagine." *Ma abhinandu*—"Do not delight."
- **Restraint**: They must use mindfulness to guard against the "grammatical structure of the world" infecting their understanding.

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The Impossible Question of *Nibbana*

- **Extinguishment:** *Nibbana* primarily means "going out" (like a fire). It is not a place to enter.
- **The Error:** Worldlings try to "hypothesize" Nibbana, making it into a permanent entity or a "Hyper-Earth."
- **The Truth:** It is the "Unfalsifying Nature." It is the end of the "thing." To say "He enters Nibbana" is a linguistic trap; there is no "he" and no "container."

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Anidassana: The Non-Manifestative

- **The Translation:** *Anidassana*—translated as "Invisible" or "Non-manifestative."
- **The Concept:** Consciousness that does not "land" on an object. It is not Earth, not Water, not Space.
- **The Nature:** It refuses to manifest as a "thing." It is infinite and luminous, but it offers no footing for Maññanā (conceiving) to grow.

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The Arahant's "Baby Talk"

- **The Usage:** The Arahant says "I speak" or "Earth is Earth," but they are not fooled.
- **The Simile:** Like parents speaking "baby talk" to a child. They use the *convention* without the *delusion*.
- **The Freedom:** They are "Skillful, knowing the world's parlance." There is no inner entanglement or conceit in their speech.

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Shaking the Palace of Sakka

- **The Story:** The monk Moggallana visits Sakka (King of Gods) in his ‘Vejayanta Palace.’ Sakka is proud of his ‘solid’ creation.
- **The Shock:** Moggallana shakes the palace with his toe.
- **The Lesson:** Even the heavens are constructed ‘toys.’ There is no safety in ‘divine’ matter. Entering the palace physically is different than ‘entering into’ the concept of the palace.

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The Scaffolding

- **The Purpose:** Concepts and grammar are scaffolding.
- **The Mistake:** "Dwelling in the scaffolding." We often worship the tools rather than finishing the building.
- **The Goal:** Use the concepts to build wisdom, then dismantle the scaffolding. Do not cling to the raft once you have crossed the flood.

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The Final Dictum

Sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya

Translation: 'Nothing is worth entering into dogmatically.'
(Or: Nothing is worth adhering to).
The Application: Not even Nibbana should be grasped. All phenomena are unworthy of the 'I-making' habit.

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The Dissolution

- **Summary:** We moved from the Worldling's 'Earth is Earth' to the Arahant's 'Extinguishment.'
- **The Shift:** From the grammar of entrapment to the freedom of *Anidassana*.

- **The Takeaway:** Walk through the world using "Two Eyes." Use the scaffolding, but do not mistake it for the truth.
- **Closing:** “Imagining is a disease. Not imagining, one is freed.”

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